

## **GOVERNMENT CONTRACT ADVISOR ALERT BULLETIN**

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**FROM:** Lynn Bateman

**SUBJECT: Federal Agency Guidance for the Acquisition of Modular Metric Construction Products; Federal Register, May 16, 1996, Vol. 61, No. 96, page 24761**

**AGENCIES:** Technology Administration, Department of Commerce (DOC)

**ACTION:** Publication of Federal Agency Guidance

**SUMMARY:** These guidelines provide information and a policy statement for federal implementation of metric-usage requirements in the acquisition of modular construction products.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Ralph Richter, Metric Program, U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Building 820, Room 306, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, 301-975-3690.

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:** The Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-418, Section 5164) amended the Metric Conversion Act of 1975 to require that each federal agency use metric measurements to the maximum extent feasible in its procurements and business-related activities. During this metrification process, the government's construction agencies (such as the General Services Administration) have worked closely with the private sector to reach a consensus: building material manufacturers, trade associations, design firms, and construction contractors.

Dimensions for the vast majority of construction products need to be "soft-converted"; the physical dimensions of the product remain unchanged while the measurement units used to describe and specify the product are changed to metric units. However, a small percentage of products need their physical dimensions "hard-converted" to fit the product into the internationally recognized building module of 100 millimeters. These products, frequently referred to as "modular products," consist of the following: brick, concrete brick, suspended ceiling systems, raised access flooring, wallboard, plywood, particle board, and rigid insulation.

The guidance requires federal agencies to conduct market research to determine the availability of modular metric construction products

before developing new procurement specifications; to consider the effects of their actions on state and local governments and the private sector (particularly possible cost burdens on small business); and to specify modular metric construction products only under certain conditions (such as the product is available in quantities sufficient to insure competition and its total installed cost is reasonable).

Further guidance on the federal acquisition of modular metric construction products is available from the Construction Metrication Council of the National Institute of Building Science and the General Services Administration's Metric Design Guide.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lynn Bateman at 703-719-7602 or 800-323-8067.

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